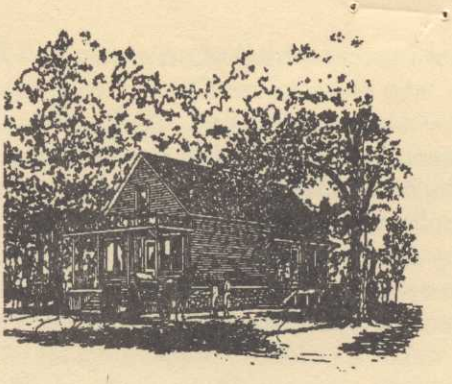

HISTORY OF MUNSTER, INDIANA

Munster was first a stopping place for travelers on their way to Chicago, then a Dutch-American farming community serving its own needs and the needs of the area from the produce of its truck gardens. It gradually changed to a suburban town and is now a leading residential community in the area. Munster has been called "The Showplace of the Calumet Area" and the "Town of Integrity."

On the Southeast corner of Ridge Road and Columbia Avenue there is a historical marker locating the site of the "Old Brass Tavern," the first building in the settlement of Munster. The history of this building is unclear. Between 1837 and 1845, David Gibson, a member of a local family of hotel keepers, apparently built and operated an inn at the intersection of what is now Ridge Road and Columbia Avenue. We know nothing of Gibson's Inn. However, in 1845 Allen Brass purchased it and the nearby acreage. Using timbers from Gibson's Inn, Brass built a large, rectangular, two-story frame building on a limestone foundation. The tavern was a busy, thriving place, well-known by early pioneers who traveled the "Old Pike" (Ridge Road) and stopped at the tavern to rest and exchange news of the day.

In 1864, John Frederick Stallbohm purchased the Brass Tavern along with 200 acres of farm-land. He and his family lived there and operated it as an inn and guest house until the early 1890's. New highways, new modes of travel and new tastes, were ending the age of the country inn. The structure burned down in November, 1909.

Dutch migration to the United States began to reach real proportions around 1850. Holland was overcrowded, taxes were

high, and unemployment was the rule instead of the exception. A large number of the Dutch who came to the Chicago area were attracted to the rich, black soil adjacent to the Little Calumet River. By 1850 settlements had been made at Roseland and South Holland in Illinois. From there the Dutch moved eastward into Indiana where they found fertile land on both sides of what is now Ridge Road. Here, in 1855, the community of Munster was established. The area was farmland, woods, and marshland with the land to the south rich in quantities of wild hay. Settlement was sparse.

Peter D. Jabaay was the first Nederlander to arrive in the Munster area. Among the founders of the community were Dingeman Jabaay with his family including three sons; Antonie Bouman and his son-in-law, Eldert Munster with his three sons, Jacob, Antonie and Pieter Munster. They came from Strijen, nine miles from Rotterdam. They boarded the ship "Mississippi" in the summer of 1855, reaching Lake County in August. A little later Cornelius Klootwyk joined the three families and together they may be called the pioneers of Munster. Peter Kooy came in 1857. In 1876 a church building was erected near the Illinois state line. This was the Dutch Reformed Church and is where the Hollanders of Munster worshiped.

The village was named Munster because it was at the residence of Eldert Munster that the mail was deposited. The only telegraph office was in the Brass Tavern and the nearest post office was Gibson, Indiana. World events and general news were discussed at the inn.

The early settlers included the Stallbohm family, the Klootwyks, Jabaays, Kooys, Munsters, Dibbles, Wilsons, Johnsons, Grugels, Harts, Van Bodegravens, and the Slykens. The 1860 census showed fifty-four Munster residents which included the seven Dutch-surnamed family groups. Some of the town's diversity was already visible; living among the Dutch were a Swiss, a Hungarian, a few New Yorkers, and one from Ohio. All were farmers except for Allen Brass and a carpenter.

A one-room school-house was east of the Brass Tavern on the quarter section line. The teachers lived at the Tavern and the first teacher was Chauncey Wilson. The first school was converted in

1870 to a dwelling and the new school was built across the street.

The Town of Munster was incorporated by the Board of Comissioners in Lake County, Indiana, on July 1, 1907. The first trustees were elected on July 31, 1907 and were: Jacob Bakker, first ward; Peter Klootwyk, second ward; John DeVries, third ward; and Fred Lange, fourth ward. Peter Klootwyk was elected first President of the Town Board. August Richter was appointed the first Town Marshall, and Cornelius P. Schoon was appointed first Town Clerk. The town was approximately 7.5 square miles in size and contained 4,736 acres of land. The first recorded population figure in 1910 was 543.

One of the main reasons for the growth of Munster is its location in the heart of the Calumet Region. It is adjacent to and immediately South of the City of Hammond, Indiana, and is twenty-five miles southeast of the loop district of Chicago and can best be described as a suburb of both cities.

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